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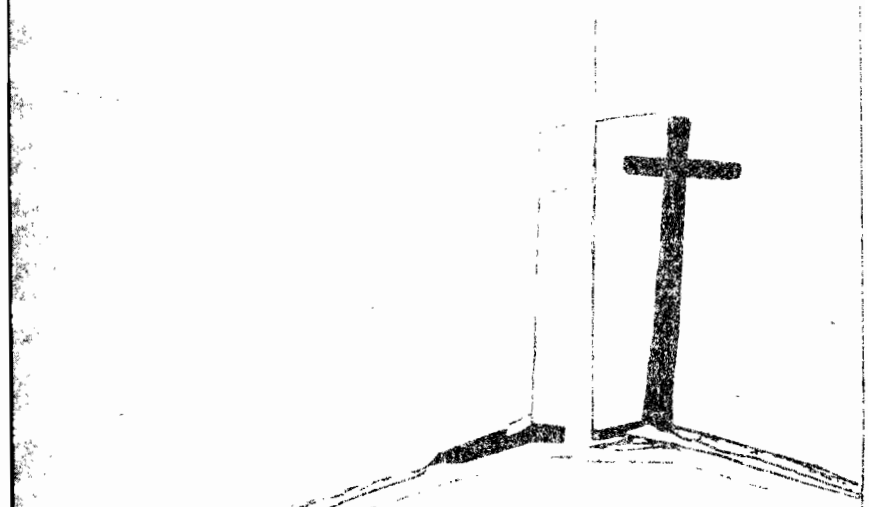

The roots of Christianity run deep into Hebrew soil. Though the Hebrew heritage of the Church is rich and extensive, many Christians are regrettably uninformed about it. Most of it has been treated either passively and superficially, or more often, it has simply been left unexplored.--Marvin R. Wilson in *Our Father Abraham.*

In This Issue:

Our Jewish Roots

We Shall Be Like the Risen Christ

Volume 31, No. 5 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **May, 1989**

The Hope of the Believer...No. 5

WE SHALL BE LIKE THE RISEN CHRIST

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. — (1 Cor. 15:20)

In the resurrection might we recognize each other's voice as well as each other's bodily appearance?

That question gets at some of the things I want to say in this installment on the hope of the believer, especially in reference to our hope in a future resurrection of our bodies. The question involves a consideration of the nature of the resurrection of our Lord, and once that is determined we have the key to the understanding of the nature of our own resurrection, for our resurrection will be like his. The above text says as much: Jesus Christ in his resurrection became the firstfruits of those who will be raised after his likeness.

The idea of recognizing each other's voice in another world may sound farfetched, but there is nothing that is more personal and more identifiable than one's voice. It is more and more being accepted as an unmistakable means of identification, even in criminal investigation. The voice competes with fingerprints as a sure means of identification. We all have a computer in our brains that can unerringly identify hundreds of different voices, even those that we have not heard for many years.

Mary Magdalene was the first to see the risen Christ, but Jn. 20:14-16 tells us that she did not at first recognize him, supposing him to be the gardener. It was when she heard his voice, when he called to her by name, that she knew who he was.

That Mary recognized Jesus' voice provides insight into the nature of our Lord's resurrection, especially when it is placed alongside other instances of his bodily appearances. When they are all taken together we can draw a conclusion that appears to be sound: *Jesus' old body was not resuscitated, but he appeared in a new order of life in a new body, but it was a body that had the capacity to look like, act like, and sound like his old body.*

One way to get at this is to suppose that you would be allowed to video tape the resurrection. What would you have filmed that Easter morning as the moment for the resurrection came? Would you have seen a figure wrapped like a mummy rise to a sitting position, stretch his arms as if he had been sleeping, and then stand up,

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RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly, except July and August, at 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas. Second class postage paid at Denton, Texas. SUBSCRIPTION RATES; $5.00 a year, or two years for $8.00; in clubs of four or more (mailed by us to separate addresses) $3.00 per name per year. (USPS 044450). POSTMASTER; Send address changes to RESTORATION REVIEW, 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas 76201.

discard his grave clothes, and walk out of the tomb through the door that the angels had opened for him by rolling back the stone?

There is no way for this to be anything like what happened. You could not have filmed the resurrection, even if heaven had allowed it. There was nothing visible to film! The only thing you would have on tape would be the collapsed or "folded" cloths in which our Lord was wrapped. Because of a hundred pounds of spices that had been sprinkled through the cacoon-like wrappings, they suddenly collapsed when the body disappeared. That is all you would have on film. You would not see Jesus walk out. He did not need to. The angels did not roll back the stone so that Jesus would have a way to get out, but that his disciples (and others) would have a way to get in. Jesus in his resurrected body (not a resuscitated body) could pass right through the wall of the tomb. But he probably did not do even that. He simply began to appear where he chose to manifest himself, first to Mary.

It is reasonable to suppose that what happened to Jesus' old body is what will happen to all our bodies, except that it happened to his body instantaneously: It disintegrated or evaporated. As it will be with all of us, Jesus' old body "returned to dust," meaning that it ceased to exist, but while ours takes many years to decompose his did so instantly. His old body disappeared, leaving behind the cacoon-like shell, neatly arranged and undisturbed, only collapsed under the weight of the spices.

This is what caused the apostle John to believe when he entered the tomb (Jn. 20:8). He did not believe when he first entered, and it was not the empty tomb that convinced him. When he saw the way the grave clothes were lying, he knew that no one had stolen the body. There was but one answer: The Lord had left of his own will or God's will and had left the wrappings behind, as if he had evaporated out of them. When John saw that he believed!

While the risen Lord was not in his old physical body, he was in a body, his resurrected or spiritual body, so it was a bodily resurrection. That he was now in a new and higher form of life is indicated by what he did in his resurrected body, things he did not do in his old "natural" body. He appeared and disappeared at will, at one place and then another, irrespective of time and space. He walked along the road to Emmaus with two of his disciples, who did not at first recognize him, but when they at last broke bread with him and recognized him, he vanished from their presence, as if out of thin air (Lk. 24:31). The two disciples, smitten by the experience, hurried back to Jerusalem to the other disciples, who were hiding behind locked doors, to tell them they had seen the risen Lord. While they were all there listening to the moving experience of the two disciples, Jesus appeared in their midst. We may safely conclude that he did not have to walk (or run!) back to Jerusalem as the two disciples had done, nor did he have to knock on the door in order to gain entrance. In his old body Jesus would have had to walk, and he did not walk through closed doors.

This was probably the meeting in which Thomas was absent, who, when he heard the report from the others, declared he would not believe unless he could see for himself. In Jn. 20:26 we learn that after eight days the disciples were all together again, and again behind locked doors, with Thomas present. Jesus again suddenly appears in the room. He singles out Thomas, inviting him to look at his pierced hands and to touch his wounded side. This is when Thomas, now a believer, cries out, "My Lord and my God!"

This shows that Jesus' spiritual body had the identifying marks of his old body, even the wounds of the crucifixion, or he could make it appear so. He made it a point to eat in their presence, again and again. But there is a mystery in all this, for surely Jesus no longer needed food and drink. It is apparent that in his spiritual body he could take on the similitude of his old body at will. Or was the wonder in the eyes and minds of the disciples, that is, did they see and hear what Jesus wanted them to see and hear? Luke tells us that the two disciples on the Emmaus road did not recognize Jesus because "their eyes were restrained," and when at last they did recognize him it was because "their eyes were opened and they knew him." So we can properly ask whether Mary actually heard the familiar voice of Jesus calling her or whether she was induced to hear what she heard. Moments before she had looked upon Jesus but she did not recognize him. Is this because Jesus did not will himself to be seen and thus withheld his identity, or were Mary's eyes restrained from seeing, like the two disciples on the road? We can't be sure.

The most baffling passage in this regard is when Jesus said to his frightened and disbelieving disciples, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold, My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Jn. 20:38-39). Jesus was certainly no spirit or ghost as they first supposed, for he was an embodied, corporeal human being, a real live person. But we are not to make too much of his saying that he had flesh and bones. For that moment he had, and for their benefit he could make it appear that he had. It was on that occasion that he ate fish and honey in their presence. But it was for their sake. His resurrected body needed no food, and while he at last ascended into heaven in his risen body (and is even now in that glorified body!) he did not take flesh and bones into heaven.

We are not to forget that Saul of Tarsus also saw the risen Christ, later on, "as by one born out of due time." Jesus came from heaven to appear to Saul, but we are to understand it was of the same order as his earlier appearances. He was in his heavenly body, and he talked to Paul as man would speak to man. It was not simply a vision. But it is not likely that when Jesus appeared to his disciples during a forty-day period, off and on with intervals of eight days or more, that he came back and forth from heaven. It seems that there was a set time for his ascension to the Father. But Jesus did not just evaporate when he was absent from his disciples during those forty days. He was somewhere, for he was a real live person. We may conclude that in some way he moved between two worlds during that period between his

resurrection and his ascension into heaven. Perhaps *between* the two worlds, in the company of angels, or did he during this time do more preaching to "the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. 3:19)?

We can only conjecture about some of these things, but a crucial truth is evident. Jesus as the risen Lord was on a higher plane, a higher form of life, than the Jesus of Nazareth who lived in an earthly body like everyone else, a body that got tired, thirsty, hungry, and one limited by space and time. When he went from town to town he had to walk the dusty roads like everyone else. But in his resurrected body he was hovering much closer to heaven, and, like the angels, he only needed to will it and he was where he wanted to be instantly. A locked door did not matter, and he could vanish from a sealed tomb through the walls as well as through an open door!

Since the risen Lord had a different manner of body, that is the kind of body we are going to have. It is too good to be true, but it is true anyhow! It is breathtaking, almost too much to take in, as David said in Ps. 139:6, and yet it lies at the heart of the Christian's hope. It is the promise of our opening text: In his resurrection Jesus is the firstfruits of all the believers that come after him. We are heirs of his resurrection. We shall be raised as he was raised. Praise the Lord!

This means that we should understand that at death we will be through with our earthly bodies. When I leave my body and it is turned over to medical science, as I have willed, I do not expect to see it again. It returns to dust, disappears, ceases to exist, and is gone forever. So, our hope in the "resurrection of the body" finds its fulfillment in the putting on of a new spiritual body, not in the literal raising of our old material body. There will be no "gettin' up time" out at the cemetery, in spite of the old gospel songs we love. Graves will not be literally opened, for there is no reason to open them. The bodies have all returned to dust. There is no way for the sea to give up the dead that is in it, as Scripture promises, for the bodies have all ceased to exist. I recall the old divine that dedicated a cemetery, saying, "What a beautiful place to await resurrection morning, and what a beautiful sight awaits those who come forth from their graves." That makes for good poetry but it is poor theology. Who wants to sleep in a cemetery? All such symbolism is the Bible's way of promising us personal bodily existence beyond death. We will be raised in that we will live again in a new body and a new world. In the meantime we go to heaven to be with Christ, not to a grave yard. But we will eventually receive a spiritual body, like unto Christ's body, and that we can call "resurrection."

The apostle John says it all in a glorious statement in 1 Jn. 3:1-3. The crucial line is in verse 2: "We know that when Christ is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." That is the apostle's answer to the question of what we shall be like in the next world. While "It has not yet been revealed what we shall be," the apostle says, it is enough that we shall be like Christ when he comes. We will be like Christ because we are to enjoy a resurrection like his. John sees such motivation in such a promise that he adds, "Everyone who has this hope in Him

purifies himself, just as He is pure." It is an exciting passage of hope and assurance.

If the apostle John tells us that we shall be like Christ when he appears, the apostle Paul assures us that we will then have a body such as Christ now has. In Philip. 3:20-21 he reminds us that we are to eagerly await a Savior from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, "who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself." It is clear that Paul believed that we will one day have glorious bodies, like Christ's. It is also clear that Christ, who as a man is our mediator in heaven, *now* has a glorious body. What an exciting contrast the apostle draws between our "lowly body" in which we now live and the "glorious body" that we are promised!

In this passage Paul sees our old bodies "conformed" into the likeness of Christ's spiritual body, and in 1 Cor. 15:52 he says "the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed." In verse 44 he says, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." In the same verse he is unequivocal about there being both a natural body and a spiritual body. However he puts it, whether "changed" or "conformed to," it is clear that we discard the old natural body and take on the new spiritual body.

In 2 Cor. 5:1-3 the apostle is even more forthright about what happens to the old, temporary body: *It will be destroyed.* When that happens "we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It looks as if the apostle is here expecting a new heavenly body the moment he dies, and yet in Philip. 3:21 he sees the believer receiving his glorified body when Christ comes. In this passage he sees the believer as groaning in his old body, "desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven" (verse 2). This makes it difficult to conclude that Paul ever saw a time when the believer would not be embodied. He even says "lest we be found naked," which indicates that he could not imagine a disembodied spirit in heaven.

If we conclude from this that Paul is now in heaven and has his "building from God" and is not "found naked," then he must be dwelling in an intermediary body until such time as "the resurrection" when he will receive his ultimate glorious body like unto that of Christ. This is an altogether possible conclusion, for otherwise we have not only Paul but all "the spirits of just men made perfect" moving about in heaven without bodies. Or as Paul would put it, they'd be running around naked! The apostle is rather definite about it in 2 Cor. 5:3, "Indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked." In view of this I find it difficult to think of Paul in heaven without a body, or anyone else who has died in the Lord. It may be sound theology to say that there is no such thing as a disembodied spirit — not the angels, not Christ, not the church already in heaven, not even evil spirits. Every spirit in heaven and on earth has a body, natural or spiritual. Except perhaps God himself. There may be no sense at all in which God has a body, except in the Bible's anthropomorphic imagery (such as God having eyes, a finger, a back, etc.), which we know is not literal.

The bottom line of all this is that *We shall be like Christ!* It is the promise of all promises. And is not this the point of being a Christian? In this life we are to become more and more conformed to the likeness of Christ *inwardly.* In the life to come we will also be like him *outwardly.* In our lowly, frail earthly bodies we may manifest the likeness of Christ by bearing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. When we live this way and so honor God in our natural bodies, we have the hope that one day our vile bodies will be discarded and we will have a "building from God," one like the glorious body that Christ has. We need no greater promise than that.

But this glorious promise introduces another, for after Paul says all that he does to the Corinthians about being clothed upon with a heavenly habitaton, he says in 2 Cor. 5:5 that "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee." The apostle is saying that God has provided us a "guarantee" that this promise of a redeemed, glorious body shall indeed be fulfilled.

Did you realize that that is one more reason why you are given the Holy Spirit? The Spirit dwells within you as a guarantee that God will do what He has promised in regard to the redemption of your body. The Spirit is there to assure us that we will indeed one day be like Christ, in body as well as in spirit. What a blessed hope! What a glorious guarantee! — *the Editor*

ACCEPTING OUR JEWISH ROOTS

Salvation is of the Jews. — Jn. 4:22

One of my old Harvard profs wrote a book on the peril of modernizing Jesus. His point was that when we take Jesus out of his first-century, Jewish context and interpret him in the light of our own culture we do it at the peril of missing the real Jesus. He gave one amusing example of what he meant. Someone took Jesus' statement, "I must be about my father's business," and pictured Jesus as a modern business man, pin-striped suit and all! It doesn't help matters any to note that the word "business" is not even in the original.

There is similar peril when Christians neglect to give proper place to their Jewish roots. It is something like one supposing he can understand American history while ignoring its European heritage. It is not too much to suggest that we must be consistently aware of the Jewishness of Christian origins and of the Scriptures if we are to make a faithful response to them. Because of an anti-Semitic bent ingrained in our "Gentile" culture it may be difficult for us to do this, but we must discipline ourselves to think boldly if we are to understand who we really are as Christians.

We must start by accepting the Jewishness of Jesus. He was as Jewish as Moses, Maimonides, or Mendelsohn ever were. He was born of Jewish parents (Mt. 1:16), and circumcised on the eighth day according to Jewish law (Lk. 2:21). He grew up going to school at the nearby synagogue, celebrating the passover feast with his family, and discussing the nature of religion with the scribes at the temple. When he began his teaching ministry it was in the synagogues (Lk. 4:16). Even his teaching was within the tradition of Judaism. It is estimated that 90% of what Jesus taught can be found in the rabbinic literature of his time. However much we may esteem "the Lord's Prayer" as Christian, its petitions can be found in one form or another in the writings of the rabbis.

And Jesus' statement that "Salvation is of the Jews" (Jn. 4:21) is hardly a familiar passage to the modern Gentile church, nor is its truth appreciated. It at least means that when the God of heaven in his mercy resolved to redeem a remnant from lost humanity that he did so by raising up a people, through which "salvation history" would unfold, and that people are the Jews. Philosophy may be of the Greeks and law and order of the Romans, but salvation (religion) is of the Jews.

Our Lord's followers were Jews and thought like Jews. He taught them and itinerated with them not unlike a Jewish teacher of his day would do. He drew his materials from Jewish tradition, from the Scriptures, and from the simple beauties of nature — all consistent with Jewish custom. It wasn't so much what he taught that eventually set him apart from other rabbis, but who he was. And he taught with an authority different from that of the scribes. But even though different in this respect he was never accused of being non-Jewish. While it was mainly the common people who followed him, there were some leaders who believed on him (Jn. 12:42). But they were all Jews.

Jesus' mission was to the Jews, Jews only apparently, the ones he called "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 15:24). The first church was born in Jerusalem, the city of David, and was made up exclusively of Jews, except that the term "church" would have been meaningless to them. They were at first simply synagogues, called Messianists, and known as another Jewish sect, of which there were many, such as "the sect of the Nazarenes " (Acts 24:4) or simply "the Way" (Acts 22:4). "Church" is misleading, suggestive of institutional structure. The ecclesia (assembly) was simply a believing community, an assembly of Jews who had one thing in common: they believed Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Son of God and the risen Lord.

The greatest day in the history of this community was a Jewish feast day called Shabu'ot (Pentecost), the Feast of Weeks, which came fifty days after Passover and was held in Jerusalem. Everyone there was a Jew or a proselyte to the Jewish faith. It was a pilgrim festival, which meant that there were thousands there from many nations, "from every nation under heaven," according to Acts 2:5. A strange series of events led to the first proclamation of the gospel by the apostle Peter. He

addressed his hearers as "men of Judea" and "men of Israel." Everything was Jewish on that Pentecost. Even the Holy Spirit that came as a rushing mighty wind and in tongues of fire was good Judaism, even if unusual.

The Scriptures used by Jesus and the early Christians were Jewish, which were primarily what we call the Old Testament. Christians and Jews alike spoke of "our father Abraham," drawing from the only Bible they had. When the New Testament Scriptures were finally written and accepted as part of the canon of Scripture, there was not a single document that was not written by a Jew, with the exception of the author of Luke-Acts, and even he may have been a proselyte. When the Bible was eventually a one-volume affair it was a Jewish book through and through. This is another reason why Jesus would say that salvation is of the Jews, because the Scriptures are of the Jews.

The context of the early church was so Jewish that the first crucial issue it faced was whether Gentiles, when they began to accept the gospel, had to first become Jews by being circumcised. before they could become Christians. This issue was debated and resolved in Acts 15 in the negative: the Gentile believers did not have to be circumcised, but there were several very Jewish things that were required of them, such as eating only kosher butchered meat (Acts 15:29). We might ask in passing, especially if we suppose that the New Testament is a fixed norm for the church today, if that apostolic command to "eat nothing strangled" applies to us? Here is a good example of why we need to be acquainted with our Jewish roots, for there is here a Jewish-Gentile cultural problem that called for measures that would not have universal application in the ongoing life of the church. But it does teach us to be generous and forbearing toward others in their conscientious scruples, and to avoid offending them.

The victory at the Jerusalem conference meant that the Christian faith would not and could not be limited to a Jewish sect or remain forever within the bosom of Judaism. And so in time it became catholic or universal. The hero in all this was Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, who, while he always preached to some Jews along the way, gave his life to evangelizing the Gentiles. Other apostles, such as James, preached only to the Jews and probably never to a Gentile. Paul says in Gal. 2:9 that "those who seemed to be pillars," namely James, Peter, and John, agreed that he would go to the Gentiles while they would go to the Jews. While Peter was now and again called upon to preach to Gentiles, it didn't come easy for him. Such was the depth of his Jewishness.

What is remarkable in this is that Paul, however open he was to the Gentiles, appears to be no less Jewish, even in particular rituals, than James, Peter, and John. Once when Paul had returned from one of his missions to the Gentiles, he was urgently put upon by James and the elders, who reminded him how many Jews had accepted the faith, "who were zealous for the law," but who had heard that Paul in his work among the Gentiles had been teaching the Jews to forsake Moses and the

law, not to circumcise their children and to ignore Jewish customs (Acts 21:20-21).

To assure the Jewish Christians that Paul was, after all, a faithful Jew who was also zealous for the law, James and the elders had a plan. They had four men who had taken vows which required certain purification rights in the temple. These were "Christians" we are to understand, Jewish believers, who were still practicing things of the Jewish law. The "somewhats" in the Jerusalem church tell Paul (they don't simply suggest it!) to "be purified with the four men." He was even to pay their expenses for the ritual. Paul did as he was told. He took the four brethren to the temple where their heads were shaved and a sacrifice was offered for each ot them, at Paul's expense and with his apparent approval. It did what James said it should do; it showed that Paul too "kept the law" (Acts 21:24).

It is not the kind of thing you would expect a Presbyterian pastor to do or a Church of Christ minister!

It is so foreign to our thinking as Gentile believers that we are embarrassed at Paul's conduct and suppose we have to make some defense of his action. This illustrates how we have distanced ourselves from our Jewish roots. There is nothing threatening about Paul's conduct when we realize that he was willing "to become all things to all men" so that he might win some of them. This included "those who are under the law, as under the law" that he might win those under the law (1 Cor. 9:20). What is important is that Paul would never have compromised the principle of justification by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law, "not for a moment" as he put it. Nor would he ever have allowed a Gentile believer to be imposed upon with demands of the law.

Our Gentilism leads us to speak of the "conversion" of Paul, as if he left Judaism to become a Christian. At no point in his life did Paul leave Judaism. He did not change religions. As a faithful Jew he received a call from God to accept Jesus as the Messiah and to proclaim God's message to the Gentiles. Paul saw in Christ the fulfillment of the Jewish law, and in following Christ he was being a faithful Jew.

Our Gentilism also leads us to suppose that the Jews must be "converted" in a way similar to what the Jews believed about the Gentile believers in the first century: that the Jews must become Gentiles (such as a Baptist or Church of Christ) in order to become a Christian.

Understanding our Jewish roots will make us more appreciative of things Jewish and draw us closer to the Jewish people. And if we believe that the Jews will one day accept Christ as a people, as Paul appears to argue in Romans 9-11, we will be better prepared for such a glorious unfolding of events if we are in tune with our roots.

It is furthermore humbling, a humility we need, to realize how dependent we are upon our roots. To guard against Gentile Christians boasting in a kind of triumphalism, Paul wrote these sobering words: "Do not boast against the branches. But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. (Rom. 11:18).

Yes, we have roots, Jewish roots. And we do not support the roots, but the roots support us. Not a bad lesson to learn! — *the Editor*

Visiting Other Churches: New Series, No. 5...

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD: PENTECOSTAL AND MISSIONARY

There are three Assembly of God churches in my home town of Denton, Texas, and I have visited all three of them. While preparing this article I visited the First Assembly of God a second time so as to become better acquainted and to ask questions of its pastor, Bill Bennett. I received materials about the denomination not only from the presbytery office in nearby Gainesville but from the international headquarters in Springfield, Mo.

In visiting a church I look for what is distinctive, that which sets it apart from others. At the First Assembly of God I felt a sense of urgency on their part, which is, unfortunately, all too rare among churches, which are often rather dull and lackadaisical. At First Assembly there is lots of Body life, with many participating in various ways. Thirteen were on the large stage leading the service, with an array of musical instruments, including four guitars, some of them electric, a piano and an organ. Women took a substantial role, playing instruments, singing solos, and testifying. From its early history this denomination has ordained women to the ministry and they serve as pastors in churches.

The testimonials interested me, coming more from women than from men. Standing at their seats, they recounted victories of faith in their lives. One lady told how she flushed her medicine down the commode and found health through prayer. A divorcee told how she had found a Christian husband, not by seeking one but by waiting upon the Lord. She found him or he found her at work. Since she was at church alone, I was curious why the man whom the Lord had chosen did not attend church with her, so after church I asked her. I was relieved to learn that he was usually with her, but that he had to work that Sunday. Then I wondered if she was only then testifying about finding her husband, if she had waited until he was not with her, lest she embarrass him, but I did not ask.

There was enthusiasm. In their testimonials they spoke of loving each other, "winning the victory," and of reaching some poor soul in a nursing home. They worshipped God by clapping and raising their hands, and speaking words of praise.

At one point we stood for 20 minutes praising God with uplifted hands. While I comfortably joined in, I could not have done that earlier in the morning at the Church of Christ where I attended. We praise God in a different way, more quietly and more laid back. No one ever raises her hands or cries out "Praise God!" It would be out of order in a Church of Christ as well as most other churches. I sometimes wonder what God thinks about the different ways in which his children worship him. We would all agree that God first of all wants whatever we do to come from our hearts.

The call for a monetary offering was vigorous and unapologetic. The treasurer, I presume, got up and said, "You know what I'm here for." He called for money, insisting that 10% of what we have belongs to God, and that if we do not give that we are robbing God. The members put their offering in envelopes and then into a plate as it passed.

There was an altar call. Three ministers received the people as they came forward to pray and seek. There was laying on of hands, healing, tears, praising God. One would say, "Do you love Jesus this morning?" and another "Church is fun!" That last exultation really impressed me . Whoever heard of church being fun!

The sermon, which was not short, was on "Precious Things," based on 1 Pet. 2:4. The pastor spoke at length on the preciousness of the family, urging husbands to love their wives and fathers to nurture their children. He called for his wife to join him in the pulpit. They make a handsome couple. He said to her, looking her in the eyes, "You are precious to me." He then told the men how to prove their love for their wives: by being faithful, considerate, and by showing appreciation. A real man, he said, is one who shows responsibility in his home.

The preacher not only preached but performed. At one point he danced before the Lord as he spoke. He likes to say, "God loves you!" and "Amen!" and even "Hello!" and "Hear, Hear!" over and over. The last expression reminded me of the old Scottish Presbyterians who prefer "Hear, Hear!" to "Amen!". To say the least, one is not likely to doze off listening to the pastor of the First Assembly of God in Denton, Texas! There is time for a nap, understand, but it is unlikely.

The pastor closed his message by inviting couples to come forward for a renewal of commitment. At least 20 couples gathered around the pulpit, joining the pastor and his wife, in prayer and praise, and one could see the couples whispering loving words (presumably) into each other's ears. While such things might appear overdone to a visitor, one nonetheless got the impression that family life is taken seriously at the First Assembly of God.

But I was in for a surprise. There was no speaking in tongues, not a syllable, not at any one of the three churches that I attended. This surprised me because the Assemblies of God are adamantly Pentecostal, and Pentecostal to them means the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which in turn means to speak in tongues. Tongue-speaking is the "initial" sign of receiving the Holy Spirit, they believe, which does not come at conversion but sometime in the believer's life, depending on the vigor

with which he seeks "the gift." One may be a Christian and a member of the Assembly of God Church without having experienced glossolalia, but she is espected to seek the gift. They teach that every Christian can and should speak in tongues (for every Christian should receive the Holy Spirit, and these are equated) but they graciously recognize that this is not the case, even in their own churches. In any event no one would be ordained a minister in the Assemblies of God who does not speak in tongues.

This has been a question of some controversy in their short history as a denomination (They are only 75 years old), and it has apparently been settled categorically: *If one has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit this will be evident in the speaking of tongues.* They are persuaded that they have Biblical precedent for such a claim. If one does not speak in tongues he has not received the Holy Spirit, and if he has received the Holy Spirit he will speak in tongues (period). Since they concede that one can be converted (and be a Christian) and not yet speak in tongues, this puts them in the awkward position of believing that one can be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit, while Paul in Rom. 8:9 insists that if one does not have the Spirit of Christ he cannot be a Christian!

An interesting anecdote from their early history concerns one of their most prominent and respected pioneer ministers, F. F. Bosworth, who, though he himself spoke in tongues, concluded after long and painstaking study that a Christian might receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and not speak in tongues. There are other evidences of receiving the Spirit beside glossolalia, he decided, such as the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.). Since this was at odds with the Assemblies of God position, Mr. Bosworth felt that he should surrender his credentials as a minister, which he did, finally joining another denomination. I found his letter of resignation interesting:

> It is with regret that I return my credentials, but I believe it is the consistent thing to do, since I do not believe, nor can I ever teach, that all will speak in tongues when baptized in the Spirit. I pray that at the next Council the subject of the Bible evidence will be lovingly considered from the Scriptures. (*Like a River*, p. 66)

When Bosworth issued a tract entitled *Do All Speak in Tongues?*, drawn from the question the apostle Paul asked, which clearly implies a negative answer, many of his peers seemed to waver for a time in their traditional position, as much because of Bosworth's exemplary life as from his argument. But the General Council ruled that it is the church's position that "the baptism of the Holy Ghost is regularly accompanied by the initial, physical sign of speaking in tongues," and that any minister who believes otherwise should not hold credentials in the Assemblies of God.

What impresses me about this story is that it was all done peacefully, without rancor and without division. Bosworth left in peace, with the blessings of his friends, and no sect formed around him as is usually the case in such disagreements.

Except for a breach during its formative years over baptizing in the name of "Jesus only" rather than the trinitarian formula of Mt. 28:19, which the church held to after much debate, the Assemblies of God have never had a division. The likes of Bosworth and the less exemplary Aimie Semple McPherson and Jimmy Swaggart may leave or be ousted, but they don't form sects among the Assemblies. Mrs. McPherson was with the Assemblies only three years, but she brought thousands into the church. She eventually left and started her own church. Swaggart also now has an independent ministry. Unlike other denominations in Denton, including my own, the three Assembly of God congregations are of one mind and one heart.

This concern for peace and unity goes back to their formative years where there are likenesses to our own Stone-Campbell Movement, one being that they too have been reluctant to assume denominational status. Like the Campbellites who wanted to be a unity movement within the church at large and not a separate church, the Assemblies of God (They first took the name "Church of God" until they realized it was already taken) wanted to be a Pentecostal movement among the established churches and not become a separate denomination. Again like the Campbellites who, when their unity message based upon the Bible alone was rejected by the churches, had to start their own denomination, the Assemblies, when their Pentecostal message was not only rejected by the denominations but even met with persecution, were forced to start their own church. I feel at home reading their material, for I note a fondness for "Movement" rather than "denomination" in referring to themselves. We do like our euphemisms, don't we?

They also advise that they are not the "Assemblies of God Church," which is redundant, but simply Assemblies of God, and they note correctly in passing that "church" is not a proper translation of the Greek *ecclesia*. And what is? *Assembly* of course! That means that "Assembly of God" is a more scriptural name than "Church of Christ " or "Church of God."

The Assemblies also eschew creeds and party names, and they baptize (in water) by immersion, noting that it is a command for every penitent believer. But unlike us, they haven't divided into umpteen sects. Neither are they sectarian in that they accept other believers as Christians, which is very much to their credit, considering their rigid stand on the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. In 1918 the General Council passed a ruling that reached beyond their Pentecostal emphases, and yet without compromise: "Resolved, that we again declare our Christian fellowship with every true child of God, and that we stand ready to cooperate with all Christians." They even gave their blessings to Mrs. McPherson when she left and started a new denomination. And you notice that they did not quarrel with Jimmy Swaggart. It was quick, not-so-painful, tough-love surgery.

And I know of at least one case where they received a Church of Christ minister who had a "Pentecostal" experience, a fine man and a great preacher who would have otherwise been lost to the ministry. He has now been with them for many years

and he tells me he preaches the same gospel he's always preached and is freer than he's ever been. He was in fact once Pat Boone's minister. The Church of Christ kicked them both out for speaking in tongues. Once we too become sufficiently "Pentecostal" we will not solve "problems" that way.

Since they stand virtually alone as a major denomination that has not splintered into various sects, I have asked why. I find two probable reasons: Their emphasis upon the Spirit-filled life and their commitment to evangelism, both of which are antagonistic to the carnality of factionalism among Christians. And these two vital dimensions of the "true church" are the very ones neglected by most denominations.

They are the only denomination in the world that have far more members abroad in the mission fields than they have at home. Starting with a handful of "Pentecostals" in Topeka in 1901 and becoming the Assemblies of God in Hot Springs in 1914, they now have 16 million members in 118 countries, and only two million of those are in the United States! The Mormons may amaze us, but they are duds in comparison to the Assemblies, who go forth with a Spirit-powered message. They have 1,460 fulltime missionaries and 100,000 national workers in those 118 nations. Their Revivaltime, an international radio broadcast, can be heard 550 times each week in scores of languages all around the world. And they have 300 Bible colleges in foreign nations alone, far more than any other denomination. They have 400 missionaries in the United States who are appointed to minister to the handicapped, such as the deaf and blind and ethnic groups. If you can believe it, their publishing house in Springfield, Mo. turns out 23 tons of periodicals each day!

Does being Spirit-filled make a people more peaceful and does being Spirit-powered make them more evangelical and evangelistical? The Assemblies of God may answer those questions.

The ancient creeds declared that the Church of Christ upon earth must be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The Assemblies of God agree, but they insist that it must also be Pentecostal. If by this they meant that the church must be Spirit-filled and Spirit-powered, irrespective of tongue-speaking, most Christians would agree. We would not only agree with their own F. F. Bosworth that one might receive the Spirit and not speak in tongues, but we would also believe that one might speak in tongues and not have the Spirit. 1 John 4:1-2 suggests as much, for it warns us to test every spirit since some spirits are not of God. Paul in 1 Cor. 12:3 also observes that some who claim to speak by the Spirit of God say things they ought not. Even more impressive is that while Paul spoke in tongues and recognized that it came from God, he placed no such emphasis upon it as do the Assemblies of God. He in fact deprecated tongue-speaking, insisting that he had rather speak five words that could be understood than 10,000 words in a tongue (1 Cor. 14:4-6,19).

Neither in Scripture nor in the history of spirituality, including the lives of the great saints of the ages, is glossolalia prominent or dominate but only occasional and unique, even if from God and for whatever reasons. The Assemblies are aware of

the lack of tongue-speaking in the ministries of the great preachers. When they fail to find hard evidence for tongue-speaking even in such animated evangelists as Charles G. Finney, they say that it is Biblical evidence that really matters. But Scripture falls far short of indicating that receiving the Holy Spirit was always or even usually accompanied by tongue-speaking.

If the Assemblies of God would place more emphasis upon Christlikeness as evidence of being Spirit-filled and less upon tongue-speaking, they could have an immeasurable impact for good upon the church at large. They are right that the modern church must also be Pentecostal and that this means to be Spirit-filled and Spirit-powered. But is the crucial truth here a matter of tongues or of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, filled with his Spirit and empowered by his life? — *Ed.*

RECOGNITION OF THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS (2)

W. Carl Ketcherside

Josephus was born in A. D. 37. He was about thirty years of age when the insurrection of the Jews which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem broke out. He was sent to a command post in Galilee, when his headquarters at Jotapata, fell into the hands of the Romans on July l, A. D. 67, after a siege of forty-seven days. After Jerusalem fell, Josephus returned to Rome with Titus, where he was furnished a special apartment by the emperor Vespasian, who also made him a citizen of Rome, and alloted him a pension. It was in Rome that Josephus wrote his "History of the Jewish War" in seven books. This history was approved by Vespasian and Titus, the latter affixing his personal signature to it, to show his endorsement. King Agrippa, who was still living, wrote sixty-two letters commenting on various phases of the history, and the author appended two of them as documentation of his work. We will insert but one quotation from the voluminous work in which Josephus seeks to account for the Jewish uprising.

"But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this war was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth. The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular; and many of the wise men were deceived in their determination. Now, this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea." (*Wars of the Jews*, 6-5-4).

Here one must distinguish between Josephus as a chronicler of fact on the one hand, and as an interpretive politician seeking to ingratiate himself with his imperial patron on the other. The facts are clear. There was an ambiguous article, based upon the sacred scriptures of the Jews, which predicted that "about that time" one who was born in Judea was destined to become a universal ruler. This was accepted so

generally that "many wise men" attached great importance to it.

This oracle was known by the Romans and is given specific mention by the historians Tacitus and Suetonius. Both of these men were eminent statesmen and authors and both lived while the apostle John was yet alive. Both were friends of Pliny the Younger, who was appointed governor of Bithynia by the emperor Trajan. He proofread their writings. Their testimony indicates that the pagan world was also in a state of expectancy, and the indication is that it arose from the circulation of the Jewish scriptures. It was no doubt the influence of this almost universal belief which caused the poet Virgil, to write his Fourth Eclogue, about the time of Herod the Great,

> "The last age, decreed by Fate, is come;
> And a new frame of all things does begin,
> A holy progeny from heaven descends,
> Auspicious be his birth, which puts an end
> To the iron age! and from whence shall rise
> A golden state far glorious through the earth."

The fact that he applied this to Salaninus, the son of the Consul Pollio, who had just been born does not affect the point that we are making, that the entire world was laboring under the conviction that a holy progeny from heaven could usher in the last age of time. We can summarize by saying that the Jews by interpreting the "time prophecies" of their sacred scriptures, had concluded that a world ruler would be born about this time, and the Gentile world accepted this because of various forces occurring to stimulate such hope.

Matthew adds undesigned confirmation to this by recording the visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus of certain Persian Magi, or Arabian sages. These men knew for whom they were looking. "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." Upon hearing this question Herod summoned the official interpreters of Judaism and asked them where the Messiah was to be born. Without hesitancy they designated Bethlehem as the place and quoted the prophecy which stated that from this city "shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel."

This last statement brings into focus my theme in this chapter. It is not simply that Jew and Gentile alike expected a divine breakthrough at the time from Jesus was born, but that a new order would be created, in which "the holy progeny from heaven" would rule and govern, and those who accepted Him as Messiah would also regard Him as Lord. In one of the Messianic prophecies Isaiah had foretold the birth of a male child who would establish a universal rule of justice and righteousness. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given." Four things pertinent to our presentation are affirmed. (l) The government will be upon his shoulders. (2) Of the increase of his government there will be no end. (3) He would sit upon the throne of David and rule over the kingdom. (4) The zeal of the Lord of hosts would perform this. (To be continued) —*4420 Jamieson, 1-C, St. Louis, Mo. 63109*

OUR CHANGING WORLD

For several semesters I have been teaching a class or two at Dallas Christian College, which is a delightful experience. This semester I have in class Jim Sutherland, a 45-year old man whose essay "From Running To Rejoicing" was published in *The Christian Ranchman*. He tells the cowboy readers that he spent 30 years drinking, partying, and going to rodeos. He'd always been a cowboy, he told them, and that meant girls, parties, fights, and alcohol. Finally his boss on the feedlot urged him to go to church. In 1987 he accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord of his life, and now his world is different. He told his cowboy friends that he hasn't taken a drink since he turned to Christ. A few months after his conversion he felt a call from God to preach the gospel, and so he is studying at Dallas Christian College and will minister among Christian Churches. We have studied the history of the Stone-Campbell movement together, using my book as the text. Jim's favorite pioneer is Raccoon John Smith. That figures!

We have a new piece of furniture at our house, an electric lift chair, which at the press of a button lifts Mother Pitts from a sitting position to a standing position. Ouida has needed this kind of help in caring for her mother, especially when I am absent from home. Now that we see what the chair will do, Ouida and I eye it in reference to our own future. We wonder if the two of us might someday have fun, each of us with such a chair, sitting across the room from each other zipping up and down at will. It sounds more interesting than a lot of things I see old folks doing or not doing.

A new journal that cuts across all party lines within the Stone-Campbell tradition is *Refreshing Waters*, 10701 W. 124th Ave., Cedar Lake, In. 46303, edited by Given O. Blakely and published quarterly by Project Plus 60, a team of some 40 individuals who are more than threescore years old. The editor describes the new journal as "a unified effort to clarify the nature and content of the Gospel of Christ." The first number has articles by W. F. Lown, Carl Ketcherside, Given O. Blakely, R. L. Kilpatrick, Harold Key, Cecil Hook, Buff Scott, Roy Key, Fred P. Thompson, Jr., J. Ervin Waters, Norman Parks, Fred O. Blakely, and Leroy Garrett, as well as voices from the past, including Dean Walker and Martin Luther. You will find this journal filled with substantive material. The subscription rate is $10 a year.

We can thank God for the doors that are being opened to the gospel behind the Iron Curtain, the latest instance being Billy Graham's invitation to preach in Budapest, Hungary. It will be a mass gathering of people from all over Hungary and other Eastern European countries in Hungary's largest outdoor stadium. The date is July 29.

A new denomination is being organized out of the Stone-Campbell tradition called Christ's Church Fellowship. Some 250 pastors have expressed interest in joining. It will be charismatic in that its doctrinal statement will affirm that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are operative today. It emerged from the Conference on Spiritual Renewal, which began in 1980 as a gathering of Restoration charismatics. It will be an organized denomination with a logo that will identify it as such on the church bulletin board.

Virtually every denomination is being traumatized over the issue of a greater role for women in the ministry of the church. A Lutheran pastor (Missouri Synod) may face heresy charges for an article he wrote in one of the church's publication. He called for a more open view of women's ministry, urging his church to follow society's lead in allowing women the freedom to perform roles other than traditional ones. He believes such values as diversity and inclusiveness will ultimately destroy centuries of oppression against women, including sexism in the church. His article accused the church of "wearing cultural blinders" and called for a return to the way Jesus and the apostles treated women. The Missouri Synod Lutheran Church holds that the Scriptures forbid the ordination of women.

I have recently had delightful visits with churches in Lubbock, Dallas, and Jacksonville, Illinois. In Lubbock I was with the Vandelia Church of Christ and in Dallas with the Piedmont Church of Christ. In Jacksonville, where Ouida and I lived 30 years ago when I was a professor at MacMurray College, I was with both the Church of Christ and the Community Christian Church (Independent) in a series on our heritage in history and in Scripture. It was thrilling to see our people, so long separated by senseless divisions, visiting each other and studying their common heritage. Such would not have been possible even a few years ago. A few days in Jacksonville also gave me opportunity to call on some old professor friends. It was sad to find two of them, once young and busily engaged in academic work, wasting away in a nursing home and barely conscious of what is going on. Other professors that I knew have passed on, hardly remembered anymore. Younger ones have taken their place and the academic world moves on. It leaves one wondering if Ecclesiastes does not have a point in saying "All is vanity and a striving after wind." What a difference it makes to be a believer! But you don't find an abundance of believers on college and university faculties.

READER'S EXCHANGE

I thought it might interest you to know that two of your articles, one on hope and the other on bearing burdens, inspired me to compose these lines:

Though our trials distress and detain us,
And time may crawl creepingly on,
Still our hope can uphold and sustain us
Till the pressures of earth are all gone. — *Roy Harris, Crane, Mo.*

Our congregation is in step with everything I've seen written in *Restoration Review*. If you know of Christians looking for a church home near Nashville (Forest Home Church of Christ is actually in Franklin, Tn.), you may want to have them contact me. — *Thomas Carr, Rt. 1, Box 67, Spring Hill, Tn. 37174*

I feel that one of the reasons why our Restoration Movement has failed is that we attempted to restore the New Testament church without understanding the restoration of God's people Israel. We have attempted to restore an historical linguistic understanding of a document (the New Testament) as totally disconnected from the people of the Book, Israel. The destiny of the Church and Israel are inseparably tied together. —*Joseph Shulam, Jerusalem, Israel.*

Your article "Inheriting the Earth" intimates that the fire might go out when the wicked are destroyed. Now I must have the book *The Fire That Consumes* by Edward Fudge. In my own study of this subject I too decided that the nature of God is involved. I can hardly wait to start reading Fudge's book. — *Elizabeth Mansur, Bend, Or.*

(Isn't it a blessing that books are not only informative and liberating but exciting as well? We recommend the book that Mrs. Mansur is eager to read to all of you. It will not only give you a fresh view of hell and judgment but of the nature of God as well. It can be ordered from us. See Book Notes.— *Ed.)*

Your writing has helped me immensely. It has brought me almost totally out of legalism. It feels so good! —*Gordon Matthews, Manchester, Tn.*

BOOK NOTES

Due to the extended illness of our bookbinder, along with the death of his wife who helped him, we have had to search out someone else to bind our 1985-86 volumes, which will be issued under the title *Adventures of the Early Church*, which was the theme for those two years. After a long delay we are pleased to announce that this bound volume will be ready to mail out within a few weeks. The price will be $12.50, which is not much higher than the subscription rate. It will be beautifully bound in hardcover and with dust jacket. If you send us a check with your order, we will pay the postage. Those who have already ordered this book will be sent a copy with invoice enclosed.

We continue to mention Edward Fudge's *The Fire That Consumes* because it has proved to be such a challenging book, one that questions traditional views about hell and endless punishment. The price is $19.95 postpaid.

It is rare for a book to have as a subtitle, "A Study for Churches of Christ," for we have not been all that open to self-examination. But this book, *Deacons: Male and Female*, challenges the all-male ministry position usually taken by Churches of Christ. The author makes a persuasive and yet cautious case for female deacons, drawing upon a wide variety of sources, including our own history. He concludes that a change can come without disrupting unity, with some churches having no deacons, some only male deacons, and some both male and female deacons. $12.50 postpaid.

Since there is so much daring thinking going on in reference to woman's role in the church we do well to try to keep up. One very readable book that challenges our male-dominated religion is Faith Martin's *Call Me Blessed* which we can send you for $8.95 postpaid.

Another title that we must keep mentioning since it so effectively challenges our traditional thinking about divorce and remarriage is Olan Hicks' *What the Bible Says About Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*. He insists that there is no such thing as "living in adultery" and he argues convincingly that all divorced people have the right to marry. $13.95 postpaid.

I am presently reading with great profit Marvin R. Wilson's *Our Father Abraham*, which is a study of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. It is high time that we do something about our ignorance of our roots in Hebrew soil, and here is a good place to start. $15.95 postpaid.

Because of a special purchase we can offer William Barclay's *Jesus As They Saw Him* for only $8.95 postpaid (usually $12.95). This is a remarkable study of Jesus, based on 42 names and titles attributed to him, such as Son of David, Son of Man, the Door, the Vine, the Good Shepherd. It is Barclay at his scholarly best, highly resourceful and yet very readable and entertaining.

There are two ways you can obtain *The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett. You can get a free copy by sending us eight subs to this journal at $3.00 each (total $24.00), including your own, new or renewals, but you must request the free book when you write. Or you may purchase it outright for $21.95. We pay the postage when you pay in advance. In any event we are convinced that you will be pleased with the book.

All books mentioned in this column may be purchased from us at address below.

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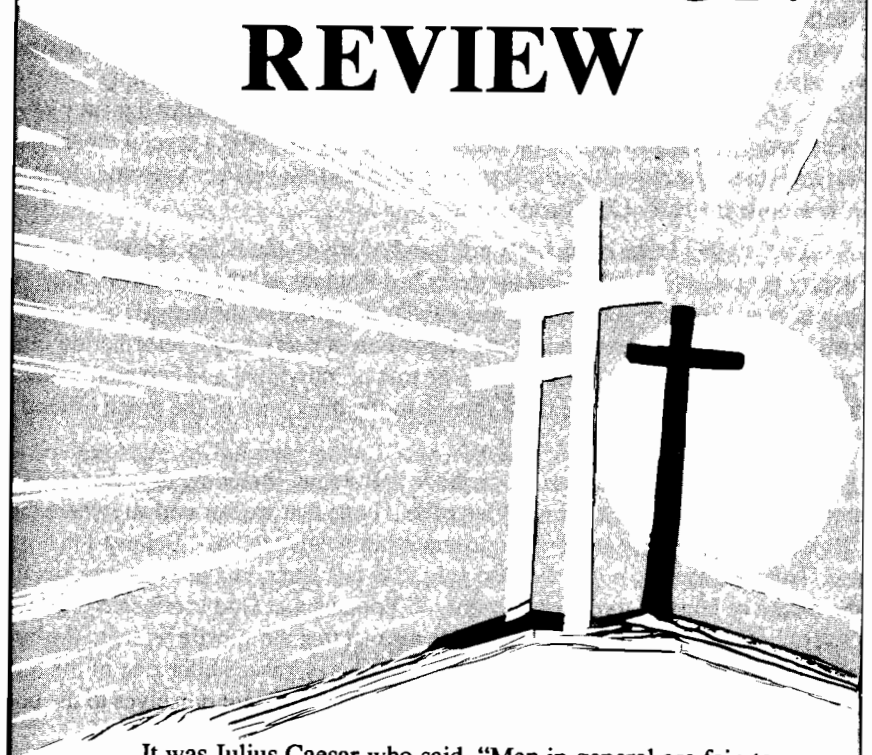

It was Julius Caesar who said, "Men in general are fain to believe that which they wish to be true." Despite that statement which I recognize as correct, I must admit that I am a born optimist. This means holding in proper perspective both the past and the present. It also entails gazing into the future with a clear vision. —*W. Carl Ketcherside*

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Volume 31, No. 6 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **June, 1989**